DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 485 CS 207 558

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TITLE	The Hows and Whys of Cody Creations (Cody's Drop-In Writing Center).
INSTITUTION	Pleasant Valley Community School District, IA.
PUB DATE	83
NOTE	30p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Creative Writing; Editing; Elementary Education; English Curriculum; *Language Arts; Learning Activities; *Learning Laboratories; Program Descriptions; *Self Expression; *Story Telling; Student Developed Materials; Units of Study; *Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS	PF Project; Writing Across the Curriculum; *Writing Programs

ABSTRACT

A successful elementary school writing center in which students follow their creative stories from dictation through publication is described. Intended as a handbook for schools contemplating a similar program, the pamphlet is divided into three sections which outline the center's history, establishment, and present format. Section 1 charts the evolution of the center from a first grade class project to a permanent weekly drop-in workshop, staffed by volunteers and used by all elementary grade levels. Section 2 offers pointers on motivating student participation, scheduling class time, assigning volunteer and teacher duties, developing channels of student-teacher-volunteer communication, keeping records, and obtaining supplies. The bulk of the handbook is contained in Section 3. Through a detailed description of the present organization of the center, the section provides a wealth of useful "how to's" on every aspect of the writing process. Included are how to: get started; develop student-volunteer rapport; get children talking; take story dictation; edit and print stories; develop an author page; and assemble, page out, and cover the finished book. Illustrations for assembling the book are also provided. (LP)

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THE HOWS AND WHYS OF

CODY CREATIONS

(Cody's Drop-In Writing Center)

CODY'S LOGO

1982-83

Le Claire, Iowa

Cody Elementary has had a very successful Writing Center.

The purpose in writing this book is to review the beginning of the Center, and its organization and to give suggestions for starting one. We are very proud of our Writing Center and welcome visitors.

A LITTLE HISTORY

As a result of the Project Pre-CEP funding, Cody was fortunate to have a first grade teacher, Mrs. Moard, sent to St. Louis for a seminar on writing centers and to meet Jacque Wuertenberg. Mrs. Moard brought home the enthusiasm and spark that ignited Cody's Writing Center.

Later Jacque Wuertenberg visited the Pleasant Valley Schools. She met with a group of Cody parents to demonstrate how to construct books for publication and how to stimulate a child's story dictation.

The next step was to call for volunteers and set up a Writing Center. Teachers suggested parents who might be interested in helping and a communication letter was sent home asking for volunteers.

We started with three volunteers who worked in the first grade. They were there once a week for one hour. To the volunteers it seemed a little frightening at first but that feeling soon vanished and it became fun.

Mrs. Moard had read the book, Do You Know What I'd Do? to her students. After that, all the children wrote books following the same format which began:

"One day I (or name) said to .....
Do you know what I'd do .....
I'd .....

This type of activity went well. The volunteer simply wrote what the child dictated.

They started taking dictation by trying to write as the child spoke. It seemed like slow laborious work. Some printers were better than others so it was decided to try typing the finished product. Volunteers learned to "page out" books in a hurry. It was trial and error, but they learned.

After everyone (or nearly everyone) in one class had written a book, the volunteers decided to try working in another class. Thus classes were added gradually rather than the whole school being allowed to participate at once.

PROCEED WITH CAUTION!!!

As we gathered momentum, the staff gathered names of possible candidates for Writing Center volunteers. A personal invitation to become a worker in this special area seemed to help.

After meeting together, it was decided that Tuesday was the best day to work so the Writing Center opened all day every Tuesday.

Teachers were given an opportunity to sign up for a time slot for their classes. Thus, one class would have a specific time block. This way, directives from the teacher could be followed each time a group came to the center. There was hardly enough time for all the classes that wanted to use the Center but that had to be worked out with the individuals involved.

SETTING UP THE CENTER

At first, coming into the Center was on a volunteer basis. This wasn't very successful because none of the students really understood how they could be helped. The faculty then discussed some alternatives for motivating the boys and girls to want to publish their own books, and those who worked in the Center developed various ways to draw attention to the Center.

1. Clever bulletins to each student.
2. Colorful bulletin boards.
3. Display of finished books in library and classrooms.

Students and teachers became more interested and soon more and more students found their way to the Center. It was the enthusiasm of the kids who had written books and had them published that really started a chain reaction. It wasn't long until we had a rush of new authors.

AREAS THAT NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION

SUPPLIES

We called various printing companies and found a few people who would let us have some of their "left overs" which were perfect for our purposes. Parents, students, teachers, and volunteers donated. The P.T.A. gave us some money and the Pleasant Valley School District gave each school a portion of their grant money.

SCHEDULING

This area takes a great deal of time and effort. At first the volunteers met, decided what times would be best for them to work and the teachers worked out a time schedule. As the Center progressed, various methods of scheduling were activated. After three years of trial and error we have divided the Center into a primary and an intermediate division. Each division does its own scheduling through representatives on the Writing Center Board.

ASSIGNIGNMENT OF DUTIES

Someone needs to be in charge. In our case these people are appointed by the

principal. There is a teacher and a volunteer in charge of each division. These two people work together and make decisions as to how various duties will be carried out. Each division has developed a handbook.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

At first little things came up that seemed to need attention, but no one knew exactly how to handle them. The principal, (with the help of the teachers and the volunteers) outlined some rules for the Center. This has evolved so that the problem areas are attended to in each division's handbook. It is very important that each person involved is informed and knows what is expected.

If at any time one feels there is a break down in communications, the principal should be informed.

RECORDS

Keep files. Set up a filing system that covers the needs of the Center.

- Pictures
- Visitors
- Teachers of Classes
- Communications
- Events or history
- Samples
- Directives and/or handbooks
- Forms
- Schedules

Job descriptions
Story Starters
Grammatical rules
Other appropriate areas

SUPPLY LIST

Typewriters - two -(at least one with primary type)
Thumb tacks - straight pins (for bulletin board)
Pencils (at least a dozen)
Erasers
Metal rulers
Staplers (regular and deep throated)
Paper clips
Brads
Ring binders (small and large)
Scotch and masking tape
Repair tape (mystic)
Scissors (at least 5 pair)
Fine line markers
Wide markers
Crayons
Colored pencils
Tracing paper
Rubber cement (2 jars and gallon can)
Pint of thinner
Thread - different colors
Sewing machine and needles
Kleenex - paper towels
Iron and ironing board
File folders
Scrap paper - scratch pads
Cardboard
Construction paper
Paper - All sizes and kinds

Cleaning rags
Material - wallpaper,wrapping paper
Magazines - pictures brochure
Big envelopes
Stencil book
Reference workbooks for punctuation and capitalization
Dictionaries (need at least three)
Paper cutter
Coloring books for patterns
Tacking paper
Laminating paper

We also use the school's equipment:

Library books for reference
Binding machine
Laminating machine
We also have a Cody sticker which is the logo for our books and we stick one in every book

ORGANIZATION OF THE PRESENT CODY WRITING CENTER

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that we should use every possible method to encourage young people to put their thoughts in writing.

OBJECTIVES

To help children improve their attitudes toward writing and their performance in composition.
To give recognition to student authors.
To provide a center that is pleasant, quiet, and conducive to good writing habits.
To provide added stimulus for producing a finished product.
To publish some of the children's writing in a book form.

WRITING CENTER BOARD

This group is made up of 2 teachers, 2 volunteers and the principal. It acts as a liason and provides leadership, training and counsel.

WRITING CENTER DIVISIONS

The center is divided into a Primary Center and an Intermediate Center. Each division has one volunteer and one teacher in charge. A workshop is presented at the beginning of the school year and each group agrees upon its own rules and procedures for the year. These are incorporated into

a handbook and given to all involved. If something is not working, the group may decide (with the leader's O.K.) to change. Nothing is written in stone. The handbook contains forms, suggestions for story starters, schedules, and other helpful information as well as the rules and procedures for the division.

GETTING STARTED

Once everything has been settled and starting dates are determined, don't become disillusioned if things seem to get off to a slow start. It takes a few days for everyone to get into the swing of things.

ACTUAL DUTIES WITHIN THE CENTER

TAKING DICTATION

If one likes to be near children, dictation is fun. There is nothing scary or hard about taking dictation. If one doesn't feel comfortable working directly with a student, there is also a need for someone to assemble, type and cut. Not being comfortable will affect the student just as much as the volunteer.

Our students are well behaved and really want to be in the Center so we have had no discipline problems. They all come in with at least a seed of an idea. The volunteer's job then is to germinate that seed and allow it to grow into a story that can be published.

Some students have their ideas in their head, others have written a group of ideas to be expanded, and others have stories that are edited and ready to publish.

After the story is dictated to the volunteer, it is sent back to the classroom teacher to be edited, signed and returned to the Center for publishing.

All stories must be edited by the teacher before they are put into published form. No story will be published (put in book form) unless it has been edited (corrected) and the teacher has signed the copy.

We have a policy in the Cody Center that if the volunteer is uncomfortable with the story's edited form the volunteer should talk to the teacher or our principal.

To take dictation from younger children, try to make them comfortable first and talk to them a little. If they don't know you, introduce yourself. Ask them what they are going to write about. The teacher usually sends a list of students coming to the Center that day and what they will be writing about. This helps! Some volunteers write the dictation by hand, others type it

as the child talks. Start with a title (if they have one) and their name. Ask the student to make sure his/her name has been spelled correctly. This usually makes a child feel important and then dictation starts.

Talk about how a book starts with a beginning, tells the story and then has an ending. Tell the student that one has to remember that the reader can't read the author's mind, everything should be written down so the story can be understood.

One might begin by saying, "The reader picking up your book won't know where to begin so let's tell him when your story took place. Did it happen one day? One afternoon? Once long ago? Last summer? Or yesterday?"

When, where, how and who are definitely important words to remember in the questioning technique. Keep questioning even if the child won't verbalize at first, then when you finally hear a word, capitalize on it and go from there.

Always expand and stretch--don't assume anything. Make the author verbalize inner feelings. These are some possible questions to use:

1. What are you planning to write about?
2. If you were a _____how would you feel?
    a. What would you like to do?
    b. What would you like to find out about?

3. Have you seen a _____?
   a. What color was it?
   b. Where was it?
   c. Did it_____?
4. Do you like_____?
   a. What does it do that you like?
   b. What does it do that you don't like?
5. Give me two (or 3) reasons why this is important.

Let the child think it out and then proceed asking the author to now tell the story using some of the ideas that were projected in the questioning.

Some children won't be willing to tell the first story, but soon they'll be writing by themselves or they won't want to wait until the Center opens so they can tell their stories!

The one-to-one relationship with the student really works. The teacher seldom has the time required to spend with one student dictating a story. One third grade boy came in with three statements about fishing. The volunteer let him tell all he knew about fishing while she copied it down. He looked at all the information he had generated. Was he ever surprised!! From there, he and the volunteer took this list of ideas, organized them into a story and wrote a book. He was really pleased and shocked to know that he had actually written a book. Third grade is a difficult age group to get motivated. They seem to be afraid of what their friends might say.

Some students may bring in stories that are written in class and need expanding. The teacher might make suggestions and send them with the student. This is handled just like taking new dictation, but we work from the original using the student's ideas and the teacher's comments. Some teachers write comments on the margin such as: "expand, describe this, tell who said this," etc. If one lets the author dictate the story and make changes (as the teacher had suggested) to improve it on the way, it seems to turn out quite nicely. Always keep comments positive. "Let's see, if we can change this. I think it will make it much clearer," for example. Or, "it is such a good story I think it would be a shame if the reader didn't understand this point." And so on...

We are quite adamant that the person taking the dictation write what the child says. When the story is complete, read it back to the writer for approval, and then send it back to the teacher for final editing.

The next step is helping the author select a cover for the book. One can choose from several sizes, shapes and materials.

This may be the only time the student is in the Writing Center so we need to get all the information we can. Therefore, we have devised a check list to record all the necessary information.

BOOK ASSEMBLY CHECK LIST

Author's Name _____ Teacher _____ Grade _____

Book Title _____

Yes	No	
___	___	Picked out cover? Describe size _____
___	___	Has it been edited? (Teachers Initials)
___	___	Will there be pictures? How big? _____ full page or small
___	___	Any special typing instructions? _____
___	___	Picture on cover? _____ describe
___	___	Is there a dedication page? _____
___	___	Is there an author's page?

Other instructions or comments?

_____

_____

_____ _____

Volunteer (dictation) Volunteer (Assbly.)

_____ _____

date date

ASSEMBLING THE BOOKS

The stories turned in to be published must have the check list completed and attached to the original copy. If this check list is missing or is incomplete, the teacher will be consulted.

HOW TO "PAGE OUT"

The first thing to do when a story is completely ready is to page it out. Some teachers may have it paged out.

To page out a story, first refer to the check list to see what size pictures the students will draw. If they do a full page drawing, leave a blank page to draw on. If they do a small drawing, write above or below the picture. If they aren't going to illustrate, make it solid script on the right hand page.

Try to type on only one side of the paper as it shows through, but it would be OK to type on one side of a page and then let the child draw on the other side.

The first page is usually the title page which includes the title, author and other pertinent information. (Date, illustrator, location, etc.)

If the author wants a dedication page, that is usually next. If there isn't one, you are ready for page one.

Take great pains to make sure that this page is attractive and looks nice.

Page two and succeeding pages will depend on previous instructions given on the check list. The pages should move left to right and be sequenced correctly. Sounds simple but can get confusing as you type and put the pages together.

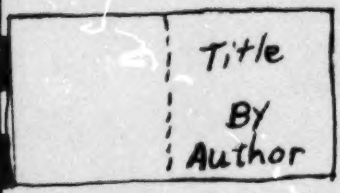
Try not to get fancy with the direction of print on the page. Children are learning the reading process and if the words hop up and down or go around in circles, it is difficult and frustrating to follow.

We like to start on the right page and continue on that side, but that is merely a preference.

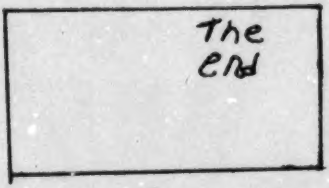
When the book is ready to type, first count the pages, get enough paper to make the pages come out right, cut and then stack the paper in book form. It is now ready to be typed or printed. Keep the stack of paper in book form and replace pages as they are completed.

If one simply pulls out one sheet at a time and then replaces it, there is much less confusion. It is very easy to mix up pages which becomes very discouraging, expecially after both pages have been perfectly typed!

TITLE PAGE



Side that is down
in the stack

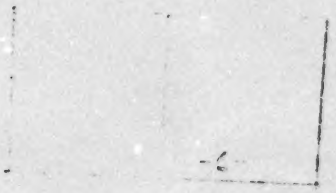


Side that is up
in the stack

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

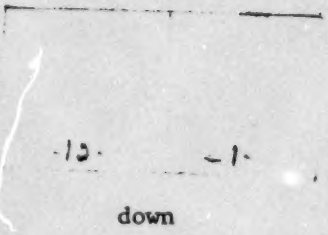
PAGE 1

down

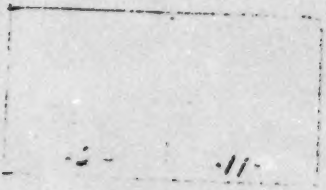


up

Or if using both left and right sides



down



up

We like to put every letter of the title in capital letters, and we also like to put the page number at the bottom.

AUTHOR'S PAGE

Encourage the author to put in an author's page at the end of the book. This tells something about the author and is especially interesting to the readers. One might include such things as age, grade, school special interests and other information the author may want to include.

Example:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Paul Whitmer is seven years old. He is a first grader in Mrs. Brinkmeier's class. He attends Cody School in Le Claire, Iowa. This is in the Pleasant Valley School District. He loves school, bowling, playing pool, and is a student in Junior Theatre. This is his second published book.

Our author's page is usually put at the end of the book but that is just our preference.

RESPONSE PAGE

Usually this is put at the end of a book. The author requests that people who read the book respond or comment about the story. Specific information might be required such as:

What did you think about my story?

What can I do to improve my story?
Tell a little about yourself.
Where do you live? How old are you?
Why did this book interest you?

ILLUSTRATIONS:

These can be done before or after the typing. It depends upon the type of book, author's directions, and how it seems best to do. The illustrations can be drawn right on the page before or after it is typed (or printed) or it can be drawn on another piece of paper and then cut and pasted to the book. Either way has both advantages and disadvantages. One must keep in mind that these are not professionally published books and mistakes are inevitable. Just try to keep them at a minimum.

The author may illustrate or someone else may do it. Again, it's up to the people who are publishing and the teacher's directives.

SHAPE BOOKS:

These are books that the cover and each page are cut to the same shape. Most shape books need to have each page laminated, therefore, a shape book is both costly and difficult. One would probably want to keep them out of the regular production and make them for a class book or something special.

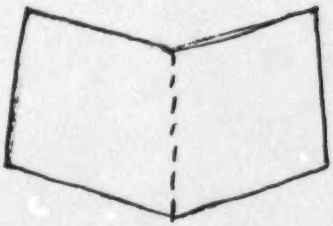
If a shape book is desired, make sure it is a simple shape. Keep coloring books and simple patterns available to use for choosing appropriate shapes. Plan ahead for binding. Some shapes are difficult to bind.

COVERS:

Poster-board Covers

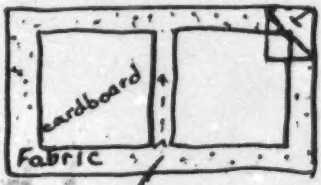
A simple cover that isn't very permanent is the poster board or heavy tag board type material cover. The stiff board-like paper is folded in half and after the completed pages are assembled they are inserted and stapled or sewn through all the thicknesses. Decorate the fronts with pictures and then put pieces of laminating film over the picture. Or print the titles neatly on the front. Some children make their own decorations which are also attractive.

sew on fold



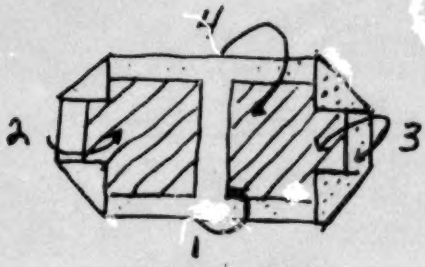
Fabric Covers:

Here, fabric is put over carboard using drymount tacking paper to adhere the material to the cardboard. Cut two pieces of cardboard so that they are a little larger than the pages of the book. Cut a piece of tacking paper the same size as the smaller. (We use scraps of the tacking paper.) Lay the cloth flat (wrong side up), tacking paper on top and then cardboard pieces over that.

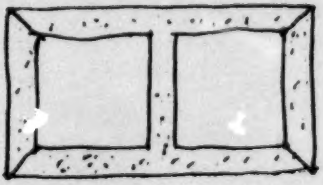


Leave at least ¼ inch between the two pieces of cardboard.

Use a hot iron to press the fabric to the cardboard. It is better to set the iron and lift it than to move it around. Fold the four corners in as shown. Put a little piece of tacking paper under the folded fabric and then press.

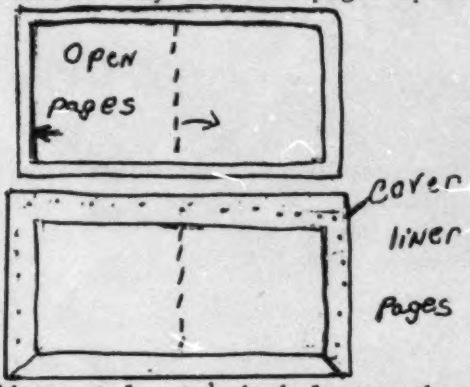


Fold bottom up, place tacking paper, press. Fold in each side, tack, press. Fold top down, tack, press.



COVER IS FINISHED!!

Now take a fairly thick paper (usually colored but not construction paper) to use as a liner. Lay the book pages open.



Cut the liner at least ¼ inch larger than the rectangle produced by the open pages. Wrap the liner around the pages and afix to the cover.

YOUR BOOK IS DONE ! ! !

Completed books are given to the child to share with their parents and friends. It must be pointed out somewhere in the beginning stages of the Center development that it is expected that the authors will share their books with the Center. Some books can be taken by the author, others may be displayed or shared in several ways:

1. On display in the local bank and in offices with waiting rooms.
2. Placed in the library or taken in other classrooms.
3. Taken to the Young Writer's Conference, and/or sent to other schools when requested.
4. Used in the Center as a sample.

It is important to keep in mind that stories are to share, and one of our purposes is to make that objective a reality.

Seeing the pleased grin on the face of a child who is feeling the excitement of receiving a book neatly printed and bound, and witnessing the possessiveness of the literary gem which has been self-created through a best effort, cannot be surpassed.

Sherry Whitmer, Volunteer
Norma Hofmann, Principal